



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

May 3, 2026

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Today is our "First Celebration Sunday" with Holy Communion in worship followed by our church brunch. All are welcome!

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (May 6) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (May 6) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (May 10) at 9:15am.

Next Sunday (May 10) is our monthly Friends of the Homeless Meal. Due to Mother's Day we will not be hosting the meal, but will provide a meal directly to the shelter.

While meal funds are good, consider donating toward our other Friends of the Homeless efforts.

We will be anticipating a Graduation Sunday Service on May 17. If you have a high school or college graduate you wish to have honored, please let the church office know!

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, you make all things work together for our good and to form us into the image of your Son. His shining resurrection shows what happens when we allow you to order and form all things in your manner. Help us to see and understand that order, what it does for us, and build us into to serve faithfully and to our best abilities.

Amen.

Prelude *The Solid Rock* Arr. R Thygerson

***Call to Worship (Psalm 119:9-32)**

How shall the young keep their way clean? By keeping to your word.

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not stray from your commandments.

I treasure your promise in my heart, that I may not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O LORD; instruct me in your statutes.

With my lips I recite all the judgments of your mouth.

I take greater delight in the way of your decrees than in all manner of riches.

I will meditate on your commandments and give attention to your ways.

My delight is in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Deal kindly with your servant, that I may live and keep your word.

Open my eyes, that I may see the wonders of your teaching.

I am a stranger here on earth; do not hide your commandments from me.

My soul is consumed at all times with longing for your judgements.

You have rebuked the insolent; cursed are they who stray from your commandments!

Take away from me their scorn and contempt, for I have kept your decrees.

Even though rulers sit and plot against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes.

For your decrees are my delight, and they are my counselors.

My soul cleaves to the dust; give me life according to your word.

I have recounted my ways, and you answered me; instruct me in your statutes.

Make me understand the way of your commandments, that I may meditate on your marvelous works.

My soul melts away from sorrow; sustain me according to your word.

Take from me the way of lying; let me find grace through your teaching.

I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set your judgments before me.

I hold fast to your decrees; O LORD, do not put me to shame.

I will run the way of your commandments, for you increase my heart's capacity.

Hymn #112 *Christ the Lord Is Risen Again

Christ the Lord is risen again,
Christ has broken every chain.
Hark, the angels shout for joy,
Singing evermore on high:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Hark, the angels shout for joy,
Singing evermore on high:
Alleluia!

He who slumbered in the grave
Is exalted now to save;
Now through Christendom it rings
That the Lamb is King of kings:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Now through Christendom it rings
That the Lamb is King of kings:
Alleluia!

He who bore all pain and loss,
Comfortless upon the cross,
Lives in glory now on high,
Pleads for us and hears our cry:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Lives in glory now on high,
Pleads for us and hears our cry:
Alleluia!

***Prayer of Confession**

We pride ourselves on what we know and what we have, thinking it makes us something. But forget that how we use all that shows who we truly are:

LORD, our Creator, this world is full of knowledge and opportunities to discover and realize. But we use that knowledge to measure ourselves against others, to keep distance from others, and imagine ourselves bigger than what we are. You properly order all things for our good, bring wisdom to set direction, and challenge what our ways alone can accomplish. Help us to understand, to receive, to accept all that you give which drives away the deepest darkness within. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Even when the darkness seems overwhelming, the illumination of the Spirit provides direction, clarity, and certainty about what is real.

May we trust in the assurances of the coming Advocate, the spirit of the living Christ, who makes all things known.

***Hymn #579 Gloria Patri**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

Reading of the Scriptures

All Scripture lessons come from the Revised Common Lectionary. Prescribed lessons are underlined, with pastoral inserts to preserve the integrity of the passage.

Hear the Word of the Lord:

Proverbs 4:1-27

4 ¹ Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight; ² for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching. ³ When I was a son with my father, tender, and my mother's favorite, ⁴ he taught me, and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. ⁵ Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. ⁷ The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight. ⁸ Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. ⁹ She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown." ¹⁰ Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. ¹¹ I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. ¹² When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life. ¹⁴ Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of

evildoers. ¹⁵ Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. ¹⁶ For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. ¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what they stumble over. ²⁰ My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹ Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. ²² For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. ²³ Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. ²⁴ Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. ²⁵ Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. ²⁶ Keep straight the path of your feet, and all your ways will be sure. ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

1 Peter 2:11-25

² ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge. ¹³ For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. ¹⁶ As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor. ¹⁸ Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. ²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." ²³ When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

John 14:1-14

¹⁴ ¹ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him,

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Sermon *The Fifth Sunday of Easter*

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is more than just a historical fact to be accepted but is a life to be embraced. It is a moment that teaches those willing to accept what it means to live, what to trust, and how to move forward with purpose and conviction within the world. We think we are just learning something new, another or better-clarified fact that we have overlooked before, but intelligence is only a fraction of what it means to live well. We can believe and accept many facts about the world, but it means something else how we use that knowledge to build our lives and contribute to a healing which embraces the world. The Christian life, a true life governed by the words of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit, accepts we need more than just facts and knowledge- we need wisdom proven by example.

That is what Proverbs is teaching and putting forward as essential to us as students of the Word and those who contribute to the building of the universal Israel, the universal Church. Wisdom in this book is depicted as a woman who engages with those along the crowded streets of life, who does all in her power to attract the attention of passersby, and bring all into communion with her and what she has to reveal. In this instance, the teacher is instructing that wisdom is built upon relationship. It is how we use the knowledge of this world to influence the relationships between one another, how we engage with each other, and to what purpose. Those who walk a “way of wickedness” are not necessarily pure evil, but they are not considerate of how their ways can cause harm to others. It is the equivalent of bumping into someone in a dark room, the taking on of a willful ignorance because the consequences challenge the way we view ourselves and others. But when we embrace wisdom, when we put away willful ignorance, when we truly allow our treatment of others to be known then comes the healing which is promised. The LORD does not hide wisdom and is willing to give generously to all without fault, but only if we are willing to accept the charge and authority by which it rests.

1 Peter 2 further instructs Christians, then and now, what it means to follow and embody wisdom for the sake of others. The apostle talks about such things as accepting the authority of human institutions, honoring the emperor, accepting the charge of those over us socially- which can be a real sticking point to some. What if that authority, that leader, that master, is a harsh and unrighteous person devoid of the ways of the LORD? What if they harm others for the sake of power, control, and material gain? That becomes a catch-22 for a people who are supposed to embody healing, hope, and the realization of a competent leadership with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But even in those situations it is how we embody the way of the LORD in the face of others' unrighteousness. Jesus suffered indignity at the hands of corrupt authorities, and at the hands of those who knew no better. But he never condemned them and only prayed for their forgiveness before the LORD. For many, seeing Jesus like this was the first time they had seen divine mercy and example played out in such a way. It was a situation which caused a spotlight to shine into the lives of others and show what their actions were contributing to verses those of the LORD's anointed king. Peter's instruction is to "conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge". We also realize there is corruption within this world, within others, we will never independently solve or purge from them through our efforts- be it revolution or otherwise. We let our example stand on its own, shine a light into the world, and accept that it will never be popular and might invite criticism or worse. Because we are reacquainting others to the shepherd of their souls, one whom they are already battling against for one reason or another.

Thus comes the promise of Jesus in John 14 with the promise of being shown a home and life with the Father, the promise of an Advocate who will steer us into proper understanding and direction. And sometimes a direction which will be at odds with what we know at the time, but which will retrain us what is the more capable solution. This is a home and way that is not invented by anything mortal and is one that must be constructed for us, a city and life established only by the LORD. The same promise given to Abraham in the ancient past but still comes to life when encountering every promise in the public realm. It is a promise that when we see the character of Jesus, of one who comes in the name of the true, risen Jesus, we will see the LORD and the embodiment of all covenant promises from all time. It is simply training us to recognize the true voice of that true messenger verses a well-crafted charismatic. To help us recognize the character of the LORD as the divine chooses to shine in all situations. Learning that our job is to heal and not overthrow, not to destroy, and not even to create- simply to sweep the already-established road so others might walk easier. To make ourselves approachable for those who might still not know. And present the people of Christ as an aid to the world and not a hinderance.

Wisdom is a life that must be demonstrated and exemplified, because it is not something we earn or keep to ourselves like a provision. It is a realization, a learning, a

means to live and connect us with others for the purpose of making known the story of Jesus. In all accounts of the Resurrection Jesus appears to reveal truth and make all understandings come together to build people up. The process of gaining wisdom heals us, makes us capable, and allows us to let go of what we imagine the world needs to be like. We accept the world as it is, mistakes, disappointments, evils and all. And set our energies to allowing the gospel to make sense within all those moments, to demonstrate what is best, and that this life is stronger than any other which can be imagined. Because it is held together by one so loving, merciful, and just that they can cause all false ideas to be purged away and be filled instantly with what is needed to make proper witness.

Celebration of Holy Communion

Let us remember in prayer:

Mary Ellen Beans, Fritz Chambers, Michelle Chamberlain, Mary Jane Dougherty, Don Eberheart Jr., Allison Folly, Kay France, Jamie Frank, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Dane & Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Simone Villarruel, Holly Waldenmyer, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.

The LORD be with you!

And also with you!

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to the LORD!

Let us give thanks to the LORD, our God!

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We praise you, LORD, for being the creator and sole governor of our lives. The one who makes all things from nothing, tames the darkness and chaos around us, and makes renewed ways to live, move, and have being within your universe. Your order is absolute, you unite all things in your love, and summon all things together to have all that is necessary to serve and honor you. Your ways are not too far away that we cannot grab them but do require our response and willingness. You desire not servants but participants in your world to demonstrate the praises of your being throughout the ages:

Holy, holy, holy LORD. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. Hosanna in the highest.

We thank you for Jesus, your wisdom incarnated, who came not to abolish and give new rules for life but to fulfill the existing instruction and demonstrate its possibility. To a group of disciples, of friends, who did not yet understand he broke bread and offered a cup and demonstrated the meaning of the kingdom by his actions. And in resurrection proved that you are closer than could ever be imagined, and you set up our lives to embody good things to those we are in company with. To explain, introduce, and proclaim the mystery of faith to those not knowing:

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

In these offerings of bread and cup, in the company of all your people, in your promised Spirit, ready us to realize and accept your wisdom. Your direction of how you see our lives and calling, and how you have called us to make your name known in our unique way. Ready us to receive your Spirit, to receive our purpose, and see all things worked out that your name be praised. **Amen.**

Partaking in the Elements

We thank you for meeting us here, LORD, at your table and the community of your saints. You have refreshed and revived us to know what you offer, how to see the world and everything within it, and know where to go and what to do and encourage praise of your name. To live the words of your prayer:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Offering our Gifts

With renewed wisdom comes renewed purpose, a new idea about how we can serve with what we have.

Offertory *Dawn's Awakening* Arr. David Paxton

Hymn #592 *Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication**

LORD, our Creator, in all situations and places you call us to represent our best of what you provide. May all we give aid that task, build up disciples, provide for the struggling, so all the world will recognize and respond to your glory. **Amen.**

Hymn #121 *That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright

That Easter day with joy was bright,
The sun shone out with fairer light,
When, to their longing eyes restored,
The apostles saw their risen Lord.

O Jesus, King of gentleness,
Do all our inmost hearts possess
And we to You will ever raise
The tribute of our grateful praise.

From every weapon death can wield,
Your own redeemed forever shield.
O Lord of all, with us abide
In this our joyful Eastertide.

***Benediction**

Hear now, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; you will love your neighbor as yourself.

With the gospel of Jesus Christ guiding you, go into the world to live this sole purpose.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***Postlude *To God Be The Glory* Arr. V Johnson**

Be blessed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever you may go!

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